1143

VOL. I.—No. 12. MANCHESTER, Saturday, October 10, 1868. Price One Penny.

"So, so;—well done! well done!"
CYMBELINE.

When feeling neither hot nor cold,
When reigns the frost or rules the sun,
We proudly Gee's rare hat behold,
And often cry "well done, well done!"
How soft it feels! how well it fits!
We joy that art so much has won,
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THE REV. DR. MUNRO

AND PRESBYTERIANISM IN MANCHESTER.

WHEN a Scottish Divine receives an invitation to accept the pastorate of a parish or congregation, he is said to have "received a call," and when his acceptance of the charge is ratified by the Presbytery, the call is said to be "moderated." This is a technical expression, and must not be confounded with the "call" to commence preaching, which occasionally ignorant fanatics declare that they have received spiritually. Mawworm, when he declared solemnly, "I'm almost sartin that I've had a call," and forsook the grocer's shop for itinerant preaching, was an ignorant and illiterate idiot. No such mockeries occur in Scotch Kirks, where everything is conducted, if not with "pomp and circumstance," at least "decently and in order." Before coming to Manchester, Dr. (then the Rev. Alexander) Munro for a short time performed those functions for the Duke of Argyll, (then the little Lord Lorne), which Dominie Sampson executed for Harry Bertram, prior to the memorable day of his abduction by Dirk Hatterick. The Doctor was subsequently "called" to the charge of the Scotch Church in St. Peter's Square, in connection with the Established Church of Scotland. This church stood on the site of what is now Mr. Leppoc's warehouse, and was opened for public worship in 1833. Some years since, it was removed stone by stone to Rusholme Road. In that church Dr. Munro officiated until the secession of the Free Church, and for some time after, and although he has been officiating for the last fifteen to twenty years in the Presbyterian Church, at All Saints', he is best known as the first minister of the original Kirk in St. Peter's Square, and in connection with the singular proceedings that took place there at the time of the secession. Into those proceedings it is not our intention to enter. We are not going to open old sores at this time of the day, or to review in detail the "*deeds* of dreadful note," which were then enacted. Suffice it to say, that after an unavailing attempt to retain possession of the building, while at the same time seceding from the Establishment, the law decided that Dr. Munro must go, and go he did. The greater portion of his congregation adhered to him, and built for him the present church with the two turrets or cupolas in All Saints' Square.

Considering that Presbyterianism, in connection with Scotch Kirks, is not indigenous to English soil, but is a sort of exotic thistle from the other side of the Tweed, the system has on the whole flourished in Manchester. Should the tendency which Scotchmen have, of leaving their native land and coming southwards, cease, we rather think that, in the course of time, Scotch Presbyterianism in England would languish and ultimately die out. Scotchmen who have been brought up to that form of worship in their own country, naturally adhere to it, at least for a time. They would rather hear a congregation "skirl up the Bangor," in all its rugged and even barbarous simplicity, as they have been accustomed to at home, than listen to the pealing diapasons of the organ, and the full choral service of a cathedral. Should the imported Scotchman marry one of his own countrywomen, and have children, the latter may probably be brought up in the same church, although the chances are great, that sooner or later they will leave and join the Episcopalian Church or one of the English dissenting bodies. At the third generation it is almost certain that the descendants of the original Scot will leave the Kirk. Consequently, for sustained support, the several Scotch Kirks must depend upon fresh importations. Again, should a Scotchman happen to marry an Englishwoman (the latter does not appear to object to such an arrangement), the probability is that he will very soon, if not immediately, go to a place of worship belonging to the denomination in which his wife has been reared. This is quite natural, as it would certainly be a much greater trial for a young woman, who has been brought up in the English Church to be obliged to attend a Scotch Kirk, than for a Presbyterian husband to transplant himself into the Episcopalian Establishment.

We said above that, at the secession, Dr. Munro's congregation adhered to him. We are not sure that it would not have been more correct to say that he adhered to his congregation. Some years before the secession took place, had any one said that Dr. Munro either could, or would ever become a dissenter, the person who could have ventured on such an assertion, would have been considered little better than a lunatic. Dr. Munro a dissenter! Why, we can scarcely realise the fact even yet. The worthy Doctor must have been amazed when he found himself drifting away from the old craft, so long his pride and sheet-anchor. Like the Irishman, whose head was one night shaved in a frolic by his boon companions, whilst he was in an unconscious state, and who, when he awoke next morning, on putting his hand to his head, exclaimed, "Faith! they've wakened the wrong man," so Dr. Munro must have thought that he had lost his identity, when he found that his career in connection with the Establishment and with the Doric building in St. Peter's Square was closed. He has all the unction of the National Church about him, nay even the Episcopate would sit well upon him. Anyone to look at Dr. Munro as he walks leisurely along the streets, at about the rate of one mile an hour, would take him for a dignitary of the Church, and he only wants the apron, hat, and breeches to look the full-blown bishop. Decidedly, in leaving the Church, the round peg was put into the square hole. However, the leading spirits of his congregation had Free Church "proclivities," which we venture to think gave a bias to his judgment, and as most of the rest of his hearers cared very little about the hubbub which was then convulsing their native land, and also stood in considerable awe of the worthy Doctor, they followed their leader in a temporary pilgrimage through the desert of the old Mechanics' Institution and the Mount Pisgah of the Athenæum, until they finally reached the promised land in All Saints' Square.

In speaking of Dr. Munro, his ministerial duties, and his mode of performing them, we must be understood to speak of him mostly in the past tense, as the reverend gentleman has now had an assistant and successor appointed, and is, we sincerely hope, about to enjoy that repose which he has so justly earned by many years of labour. Dr. Munro managed, (we use the word advisedly) managed his congregation, and kept it together with great skill, by a well-organised system of Sunday and day schools, house-to-house visitations, mutual improvement societies, clothing and Dorcas clubs, tea-parties, and other machinery usually associated with churches and chapels. Young folks of the present day, who enjoy the inestimable luxury of the Saturday half-holiday, are little aware of what their predecessors went through on Saturday and Sunday a quarter of a century ago. At that time many of the Sunday school teachers of the Scotch Church finished their week's labour about midnight, sometimes even later. After dragging their weary limbs home, to some dreary lodging probably, they were expected to be up betimes and spend an hour in the school before service. Then church until half-past twelve. Home to dinner. Then back to school and afternoon service. Can it be wondered at that numbers of young men, and women too, detested the whole affair?

As a preacher, although he is not without force, Dr. Munro has never excelled. Like most Scotch divines, he is argumentative and logical, and his sermons are composed and put together with some arrangement and method. He is combative, and delights in controversial questions, and, in his earlier days, used to indulge in raising up heterodox ogres for the purpose of knocking them down again like so many ninepins, which he did with much relish and gusto, and "thrice he slew the slain." He is of the old school. He frequently avoids plain language, preferring to use round-about circumlocutory expressions. Thus, on one occasion,

when illustrating his subject, he referred to the invisible substance gas, as a powerful but unseen agency; but instead of saying gas, he called it the gaseous fluid, a pompous and turgid expression, which utterly spoiled his illustration. Occasionally, when he is on his mettle, or disposed to be testy, he breaks through conventional trammels, blurts out a homely remark, and gives his hearers a bit of real nature. On one occasion, while enlarging on the vanity of human wishes, alluding to Alexander the Great sighing for fresh worlds to conquer, he suddenly brought the subject to a close by remarking, "this conqueror of kingdoms—died of drink." Dr. Munro's sermons, delivered as they are in a very monotonous key, sometimes have a very soporific effect upon his congregation. One hot Sunday afternoon, yielding to the drowsy hum and influence of the hour, a young man in the centre of the church was enjoying a comfortable snooze. The preacher's attention was drawn to the unconscious sinner, and, suddenly stopping short in his sermon, he maintained a dead silence for a few seconds. This interruption to the previous noise had the effect of arousing the sleeper, just as the stopping of a railway train will awaken a passenger in a similar state. Hardly had the unhappy culprit got his eyes open, when the preacher called out in a loud voice, at the same time bringing down his fist with much energy on the Bible, "There's an individual asleep down there." There was no more slumbering during the remainder of *that* discourse. Another time two persons were not conducting themselves with decorum, when the tor suddenly exclaimed, "There are two persons in the body of the church misconducting themselves. If they do not immediately cease, I shall take the liberty of mentioning their names."

Notwithstanding the length of time he has lived in England, Dr. Munro retains much of the Scottish accent, and speaks with a decided bur or "burrr," as he himself would call it. Like many Scotch preachers, he is greatly addicted to Biblical expressions. This peculiarity is chiefly noticeable in his prayers. Thus, a female member of his congregation, if she happens to be a matron, is always termed "a mother in Israel." The congregation itself is "a corner of a vineyard," and their homes are "respective places of abode;" whilst sailors are "those who go down to the sea in ships." We once knew a preacher whom nothing could induce to use the word potato in the pulpit. Corn and wine were all very well, but potato was not a biblical expression, consequently in alluding to the potato disease, he had to have recourse to "that root, the sustenance of, &c.," and other similar round-about phrases. It is surprising how the traditional method of preaching still prevails. Dr. Caird and Dr. McLeod struck out a line of their own, but so far, they have few followers. There is an old story that a somewhat sycophantish clergyman one day, in praying for a lady of rank, altered the word "woman," and said, "this lady, thy servant;" whereupon the clerk, not to be outdone, promptly responded, "Who putteth her ladyship's trust in Thee." Whether this is true or not we can't say, but it is not so long since we heard a minister declare in the pulpit that Ephraim was his, Manasseh also was his, Moab was his wash pot, and he had cast his shoe over Edom. It was our impression at the time that there were not six members of his congregation who knew what he was driving at. Certainly we didn't. Some preachers adopt a style of exhortation towards the conclusion of their sermons, by asking their hearers a number of pointed questions. Dr. Munro rarely uses this mode of exhortation, which becomes wearisome and feeble. We recollect on one occasion, hearing a young curate preach a sermon on saints and sinners, whom he designated sheep and goats. In winding up his discourse, he put his listeners through a fire of questions, concluding by asking each of them, when they returned home, to retire into the solitude of their closets, and there solemnly ask themselves this question, "Am I or am I not—a goat?"

During his ministry Dr. Munro has exercised considerable influence on the minds of many of his congregation, of whom he has mostly kept a-head in mental culture. He has stamped much of his own individuality on numbers of his hearers, some of whom, who have now arrived at middle age, he baptized when infants.

TOWN TALK.

THE Conservatives have decided to try their chance for the third Manchester seat with Mr. Joseph Hoare, a London banker. Mr. John Cheetham, M.P., one of the Liberal Candidates for Salford, is in such a weak state of health that he has had to leave England for the Continent. He is now, we believe, in Switzerland.

THE step taken by the Bishop of Manchester with regard to St. Alban's Church, Waterloo Road, and the Rev. J. E. Sedgwick, has caused some sensation this week. We believe the facts to be these. Acting on certain information which he had received, the Bishop had an interview with Mr. Sedgwick, and requested to know whether the statements that had been communicated to him were correct, alluding chiefly, we are informed, to the confessional, and the lighting of candles on the altar. Mr. Sedgwick admitted that they were, but added that he only confessed as enjoined by the Prayer Book and Rubric of the Church of England. Thereupon the Bishop gave him notice that he would withdraw his licence after the 31st of October, which he has the power to do, as the church has never been consecrated. On receiving this intimation, Mr. Sedgwick at once resigned, and has since been appointed to a living in the South. As affairs now stand, unless the Bishop renews his licence, we believe the church will be locked up at the end of the month. The presentation rests with the Dean. In the meantime, the supporters of St. Alban's are making vigorous efforts to raise sufficient funds to enable them to have the church endowed, when consecration ould of necessity follow.

SHAKESPERE'S play, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, is to be brought out on the 17th instant, at the Theatre Royal. The comedy was performed one night last season, on the occasion of Mr. Everill's benefit, with much success. We understand that Mr. W. Farren, the popular actor, lately of the Haymarket Theatre, is engaged to play Master Slender, and Mr. Henri Drayton will take the part of Ford. Mr. Drayton is well known in Manchester in such operatic characters as Count Rodolpho and Devilshoof, and has always been an efficient actor as well as singer. Lately he has been devoting himself more exclusively to dramatic impersonations, and will doubtless make a satisfactory "Master Brook." Mr. Everill makes up capitally as Falstaff, and plays the part with much unction. Excepting Mr. Addison, and possibly Mr. Phelps, there is no actor on the stage who is his equal in the part. The play will be newly mounted, and new scenery is being painted for it. If the other characters are as well played as they were last season, we anticipate for the comedy a genuine success.

UNDERGROUND LOCOMOTION.

AT the last meeting of the General Purposes Committee of the City Council, a proposal was submitted to it for an underground railway through the city, from a point near Albert Square, to Greenheys, Rusholme, Fallowfield, and Didsbury. The members present were of opinion that the line would, if carried out (or rather *in*), be of great convenience to thousands, and we agree with them; though we cannot overlook the fact that a tunnel of the length proposed, must necessarily be a tremendous *bore*.

"We have all our little failings in this world!" as old Breakabills said, when he compounded with his creditors for the fifth time.

THE ITALIAN OPERA.

WE commend to the study of Mr. Matthew Arnold a subject suited to his despondent mind. We mean Manchester society. Last week the Theatre Royal was inconveniently crowded to witness three farces by Mr. Buckstone. This week the master-pieces of Beethoven, Weber, and Mozart have been performed before a scattered dress-circle, and at least two rows of empty stalls. The neglect with which casual fine music is treated only exposes the hollowness of the fashionable audiences which fill Mr. Charles Hallé's concerts. It is only accident that brings these fine toilettes and this fine music together. If it were the fashion to congregate on the roof of the Free Trade Hall, and listen to concerted pieces by the local cats, instead of sitting inside and yawning over Bach—why these people would be there instead, *voila tout*. The few who go to concerts for the sake of the sympathetic noises they hear will already have been to the opera, with that mixed sensation of gratitude and half-crowns, which we admit is inevitable. But then half-crowns can be no consideration to Mr. Charles Hallé's subscribers.

Mr. Mapleson has brought a powerful company, and his répértoire is admirably adapted to illustrate every style of opera. We may interest some of our readers if we notice these works in the order in which they are given, before we criticise any performance in detail.

Mozart's *Figaro* is well placed at the head of the list, for it might have been the original source of operatic music. There is an absolute power of beauty in this work which is independent of the acting and the words. Indeed, the libretto is ugly enough to spoil any music. But the beauty, the earnest beauty of Mozart's music is not to be effaced. If some one were to scribble infamy over the face of Raphael's Madonna, we believe that the beauty of the face would burst out from behind it and in spite of it. And so it is with the music and the libretto of *Figaro*.

Very different is Meyerbeer's *Huguenots*, in which music, libretto, acting, and scenery are equally necessary to each other. And for this reason it is likely to be the least successful with a travelling company.

It is interesting to compare Rossini's *Barbiere* with *Figaro*. In Mozart, the flower of Italian melody is united to the most consummate technical skill. In Rossini the same luxuriance of melody is matched with a kind of careless elegance of construction.

Weber's *Freischütz* is in an entirely different style from the preceding operas. Its first appearance was the revelation of a new realm in music. It was the discovery of a romantic world in sound. Its power is almost demoniacal, and shakes you from head to foot. The character of the Satanic Caspar, and the exquisite innocence of Agatha, are delineated with equal force—with an accruing force in proportion to the extremity of the contrast.

Flotow's *Marta* is a very agreeable combination of French gaiety and German integrity. It holds a bright and a singular position between the boundaries of two musical empires—coquetting first with one and then with the other.

Beethoven's *Fidelio* cannot be described—it can only be heard and felt, and let every one express his dumbness in his own way. Beethoven refused to write to a libretto which was not perfectly pure, and for this reason we have only one opera from his pen. But it is difficult to believe that we have suffered any loss when we remember that that one opera is *Fidelio*. The grandest dramatic effect in the whole range of art occurs, in our opinion, at the end of *Fidelio*. It is not contrived by any apparent design, but strikes one as quite awful and natural, even in the opera. During the last scene between Fidelio and Pizarro, it happens that a troop of cavalry is advancing. At the moment, when Fidelio points the pistol to Pizarro's breast, an accidental trumpet-signal from the soldiery sends terror through his heart. You feel with Pizarro the terror of judgment day. We consider these three trumpet notes the greatest triumph of dramatic effect ever conceived.

Verdi's *Trovatore* is another example of that art of melody which is the chief feature of the Italian school. Verdi has a profound knowledge of the weak side in musical taste, and so he employs melody with peculiar skill. He steals with syrenical smoothness of song through the ears to the heart, without paying a protracted visit to the intelligence. He knows perfectly well that his music is not always suited to the situation. People whose musical education is but little advanced, and who have made the acquaintance of Verdi's airs in the ballroom or on the barrel-organ, are surprised when they hear the opera afterwards. They are apt to find that their favourite waltz is written to a death-bed, and that the fashionable mazurka was inspired by infanticide. Very different from Mozart and Beethoven. Verdi has gained a high reputation, but, we think, not a lasting one. He is not a missionary of the noblest in his art. He will always command attention by his brilliancy, but beware of imitators!

By the side of Verdi, Gounod is almost a classic. There is true inspiration in *Faust*, although the grandeur of Goethe's poem is somewhat reduced and Frenchified by Gounod's music. The effect is as if a Parisian outfitter had captured a grand old simple German professor, and dressed him in the costume of the Boulevards. *Faust* is full of melody, and contains passages of real dramatic power. But Gounod seldom rises to the height of tragedy. Like Icarus, he soars to reach the empyrean; but when he is nearest, as in Valentina's death scene, the divine fire melts him into the fatal prettiness again. The influence of Gounod upon musical taste can only be for good, in the face of our present degeneration.

It would be impertinent to criticise *Don Giovanni*. It is beyond us. The earnestness of the music seems to cast a spell even over the performers. We have seen the singer become an artist, and the artist melt his individuality in the consuming fire of Mozart's genius. In many Italian operas you might take an air out of one part, and throw it into another, and, perhaps, improve the effect. But in *Don Giovanni* every single chord is "set" like a ruby in a bracelet. If taken out, it won't fit in anywhere else.

Our remaining space will only permit us to do justice to one performance in detail. We will, therefore choose the opera which probably makes greater demands upon the resources of a theatre than any other—namely, *The Huguenots*. The successful performance of this opera is a good guarantee of the capacity of a company. Our first musical sensation upon entering the theatre on Tuesday night was the thinness of the orchestra. It would not be difficult to suggest many easy improvements. But what is the use? We ought not to measure a travelling company by the highest standard. Let us be grateful for small mercies.

To criticise Mdlle. Titiens, is always an easy task. It has become a question of always saying the same thing in a different way. Her singing in the part of Valentina is faultless, and her acting is a noble piece of tragedy. There is a profusion of voice and an easy magnificence of style about her that inspires you with a confidence of enjoyment. When she is singing, the critic leans back in his seat, with the feeling of having left a better sentinel in his place. The scene between Valentina and Raoul, at the end of the third act, is the most daring flight in the opera. The duet, "Tu mio sospir," and the air, "Che Raul, il mio dolor" were sung with a terrible reality, that made you wonder how Mdlle. Titiens could remember to sing during such acting, or how she could remember to act during such singing.

The new tenor, Signor Mongini, has the most robust tenor voice we have ever heard. Its fault lies in an almost uncontrollable power in the high notes, to the exclusion of the more delicate tones. This fault was very marked in the celebrated "Piu bianca del velo," which should be rendered in a crescendo style. It begins with the delicacy of lilies, and deepens until it gathers into a hurricane of passion and protestation at the end. The very power of his voice would be more remarkable if he could throw more gentleness and softness into the "piano" movements.

We cannot speak too admiringly of Mdlle. Trebelli-Bettini. She shows herself a true and conscientious artist. Her style is pure almost to severity. She possesses a sweet, clear voice, cultivated to its highest pitch. After hearing her mastery of the florid music of *Il Barbiere*, we remember with all the more admiration her Urbano in *The Huguenots*. The air "Nobil donna e tanto onesta" was given like an anthem. The more brilliant "No! No! No!" was written for Alboni. She refused to play the part as it stood originally, because she had not enough to sing. As long as Mdlle. Trebelli-Bettini takes it, the same objection remains in force. But we venture to suggest that she might torture her face less when she is exerting her voice. When she smiles, she nearly destroys the illusion of her prettiness.

Mr. Santley, like Titiens, has out-distanced criticism. His singing and acting in the part of San Bris were both of the highest order. We are almost tempted to pay him a left-handed compliment by saying that his acting was even finer than his singing. But it wouldn't be true.

Signor Foli's conception of the stern and unbending Marcello was full of truth. He looked like a true hero, without a suspicion of humour. Indeed, if anything, he over-acted the severity of the Huguenot, and did not throw enough animation into the song "Finita e pe frati." His voice rolled out like an organ, full of a kind of worship.

Mdlle. Sinico has a brilliant and flexible voice, but Margarita di Valois is not the style of character that suits her best. It is too serious. She sings to greater advantage in lighter parts and lyrical music.

The choruses were fairly executed. If the gentlemen of the chorus will put more life into the Rataplan next time, we promise to print all their names in full. We think we should have room. By the bye they are not, as a rule, fine actors. In the conspiracy scene they gaze at the audience quite affably, and when they go out with an eye to bloodshed, they get their swords between their legs. They are the most agreeable ruffians we ever met. It is not uncommon in opera to see a man throw back his head and adjust his cravat, while he is being accused of treachery by the basso profondo, or tenderly confided in by the mezzo-soprano.

And now we think we have mentioned everybody. But no—we forget. We should not be conscientiously noting all we heard if we did not add that the prompter has a fine voice. But it is powerful rather than sweet.

GARDENING EXTRAORDINARY.

Talk of professional gardeners! We lately saw a feat performed by an amateur that might awaken the envy of the best of them. A young lady, with whom we have the particular felicity of being acquainted, recently, in her own garden, raised a pair of beautiful blue eyes from the ground, while a bevy of admiring onlookers stood around.

"Nothing like a magistrate for refining a man's tas'es," as the incorrigible old "drunk and disorderly" said, when he laid down his five shillings for the tenth time.

CURIOUS ANECDOTE.

THERE was once an ancient town
With an atmosphere of brown,
And a river of a sort of browny black;
With a tinge of madder blue,
And a greenish mixture too,
And of dirty burnt sienna just a smack.

People said it was a sewer,
But it was not half so pure,
And it had not such an aromatic scent,
And no arch did o'er it curve,
So the name, you will observe,
Didn't prove to be so apt as it was meant.

And the ancient record tells
That of all the nasty smells
Which have made folks hold their noses since the first,
The aroma of the stuff
That stagnated in this sough
Was the very, very, very, very worst.

To be plain, we are convinced—
Though the corporation winced,
And each one of "the authorities" should blink—
We should still be in the right,
If we were not so polite,
But asserted that aroma was a stink.

So offensive was the stench
That the passers by that trench
Ran as fast as they could put to ground their legs;
For the odour, we are told
Was the perfume of green mould,*
With a *soupçon* of the smell of rotten eggs.

And not only did the smell
Make the senses feel unwell,
But the vitals were not partial to the scent;
And folk's lives had used to say,
If it didn't go away,
They themselves would—and it didn't—so they went.

And the people died around,
And their corpses strewed the ground,
And they filled the civic cemeteries full;
And the death-rate's dread alarms
Grew so loud, the city's arms
Might have been a pair of crossbones and a skull.

When the populace complained
That the nuisance still remained,
The authorities wept much, and cried, "Oh, oh!"
Smote themselves upon the breast—
Just where open is the vest—
And observed 'twas very sad, if this were so.

But lo! when the people prayed
That they'd kindly lend their aid
To abolish it, they all exclaimed, "No, no!
It's very fine to talk,
But difficulties baulk,
And difficulties nought can overthrow."

'TIS THEIR INFIRM-ITY.

Barsby, our manufacturing friend, says it is all humbug to talk of a lot of the leviathan, Haphazard & Co.'s of our city, with their huge six-story piles, as "great commercial firms;" for, judging from the shaky condition of some of them, evinced by the difficulty he finds in getting payment for his stuff, they are much more like "great commercial *infirms*."

DEAD DRUNK.—Funeral Beer.

PUNCH.

GREATNESS has its disadvantages, no doubt. When you want to knock down a cabman, it is awkward to be a justice of the peace. When you learn that there is brandy in the tempting bit of plum-pudding you are just raising to your lips, it is unpleasant to be a strict teetotaller. When you have a headache at an evening party, it is uncomfortable to own the reputation of being a wit. But, if people do expect great things of celebrated persons, at least they are ready to magnify the smallest efforts of such persons and be satisfied. Their appreciation is so high that it comes up to their expectation. Puns that are execrable in H. J. Byron are wit in W. Shakespere. When what is, or has been genius, thus lives upon its reputation, it is living very extravagantly, without a doubt; still it is extraordinary how long it can keep up. This is especially remarkable in the case of papers. It is wonderful how long a paper can exist upon a very short reputation. Let the first few numbers be good, and let the thing once get into public favour, then, however poor it may be afterwards, the public go on reading it and believing in it. If it has been excellent for a long period, its fame is almost amaranthine. Its ordinary feebleness they regard as strength; its occasional outbursts of vigour they admire as Herculeian. It is thus with *Punch*. *Punch* has been living upon its principal instead of its interest for a long time, yet *Punch* is still the recognised authority in matters of wit and humour. The incomparably better-bad jokes of the swarm of other comic periodicals are all fathered on to *Punch*. *Punch* gets credit for every chance good thing that is remembered. A man is amused at a witticism in *Fun*, and straightway he goes and tells the first acquaintance he may meet, what a capital thing there is in *Punch* this week. Or he may take a fancy to a sketch in *Judy*; he is sure to talk about that admirable cut in *Punch*. The paper has got imbedded in society. It is part of England. It is the comic *Times*. Typical of comic papers, it is the representative of professional jesting. *Punch's* letter-box is itself an institution. It is the receptacle of all the stray jokes in the country. Everybody sends his wit's first-born to *Punch*. The waste-paper basket at 85, Fleet Street—the great W. P. B.—is a perfect tomb of first-borns. True, hundreds of abominable jests find their way into the W. P. B's. of other comic papers, but they are mostly the produce of confirmed jesters, who are afflicted with a harmless mania—very beneficial to the Post Office—for pelting comic periodicals with contributions. These persons, no doubt, toddled their first bantlings off to *Punch*, and have only been induced to try their luck elsewhere by a severe and prolonged course of W. P. B. Mr. *Punch* once gave a sample column of rejects: which was injudicious of Mr. *Punch*; for some of his rejects were considerably better than some of his insertions. However, whether it be right or wrong, the general public is firmly impressed with the idea that it only needs merit to get in—blind to the hackneyed fact that merit has very little to do with getting in, or on, anywhere. Not only do people believe that they will get inserted if their contributions are meritorious, but that they will certainly get paid for such as are inserted. Experience proves the fact; for does not everybody know a man who knew the fellow whose advice "to persons about to get married" was "don't," and who got £5 for it? Certainly. We never talked to anyone about *Punch* but he knew a man who knew that fellow, and could vouch for that £5 as a positive fact. Pretty little fiction, exemplary of the repute of Mr. *Punch*! He is not only a philosopher, but so rich that he can afford to fling a five-pound-note to any casual jester whom he may deign to honour with a little hebdomadal immortality. He is so wealthy that the world—with the exception of the members of his staff—believes he pays a note for every one-line jest in all his volumes, and so clever that no one ever takes him up without finding in his columns "the best thing they have seen for a long time."

To drop from reputation to desert, *Punch* is used up. That cheerful humourist and pleasant wit, but horrible punster and barbarous rhymester, Mr. F. C. Burnand, does all an indefatigable contributor can to galvanise a little life into the feeble old body of Mr. *Punch*, but what can one lively spirit do amongst a dozen drones? He does wonders, but he cannot do impossibilities. How he keeps up his spirits is a marvel. He must sometimes feel downcast. When he takes up number after number, and finds that everything happy and sparkling is his own, and everything of everybody else's is as dull and heavy as lead, he cannot help being dispirited. And yet he bears up. Week after week, he lightens the dull pages. Mr. Burnand is one of the old sort. He is worthy of talented colleagues. His would have been a valuable pen even in *Punch's* palmy days. But he has fallen on hard times. He is harnessed to a set of old fogies, who can only make long extracts from other papers about somebody's sayings (or doings), and add, "Just so! Exactly so! Mr. *Punch's* own sentiments! Precisely what Mr. *Punch* would have said (or done) under the circumstances. Mr. *Punch* takes his hat off to you, and wishes there were many more like you. Let us liquor." This sort of thing is not funny. It is not even clever. It is merely a contributor's desire to express his concurrence with somebody or something; and of this sort of thing *Punch* is now full. It seems to have forgotten that its mission is to be amusing, and not to express its opinion about anything and everything. That is the province of the newspaper; and positively a serious newspaper is often more interesting than *Punch*. Now and then one comes across a bright idea, or merry jest, or funny satire, which serves to show how enjoyable the paper is when it is true to its position; but, as a rule, it is difficult to conceive how men who are supposed to write only when a humour seizes them, can be so eminently dreary. There is plenty of wit in the country to support a paper of this sort: Mr. *Punch* ought to send one half of his staff to the right-about, and get some fresh blood in his veins.

But, however badly *Punch* is written, and however poor its smaller wood-cuts are, it will always hold its place at the head of comic papers, so long as Mr. Tenniel is a member of its staff. Many people say the Cartoon is *Punch*, and do not care how feeble is the letter-press. Without going quite so far as that, we may safely say, *Punch* would not be *Punch* without the cartoon—without Mr. Tenniel's cartoon. Nobody else can equal him. *Judy* has excellent cartoons, good both in idea and execution—often better in idea than *Punch's*—but when Mr. Tenniel comes out with one of his masterpieces—such as Mr. Bright before the looking-glass, a week or two ago—he distances all imitators. There is a certain suitability between his style of drawing and the style of satire in a cartoon. His peculiar angularity and stiffness give immense effect to most of his subjects. His best efforts are towers of strength, and *Punch* could no more do without him than a man could do without his backbone.

Punch's smaller wood-cuts are very popular. Hundreds of *Punch's* "readers" do not read a word of him. Directly they have seen his pictures they fling him down. This is very wrong, but it is so. Consequently, these smaller sketches ought to be first-rate; and so they used to be. It is useless to bewail the loss of Leech. Of course it is impossible to find his equal. When a man is unique, it usually is. But he worked long and hard before we lost him, and now that he has gone he cannot be recalled. We need only trouble ourselves about his successors. Mr. George Du Maurier was no unworthy one; but the amount of work he does on *Punch* gets less and less—we fear from what cause—as the months roll by. Mr. Charles Keene is vigorous and industrious as ever. But we grieve to see, week after week,

the columns of *Punch* are more and more given up to women. The influence of women on the press is great, at the present time: it is greater than good. Some women are very clever, but women bring weakness wherever they come. On all departments of literature their influence is enervating: they bring flimsiness and insipidity with them. Added to this, clever women are generally ugly—(we are not now speaking of Miss Bowers: she may be the fairest of her sex: most women are)—and a slight grudge against beauty, or at least want of appreciation of it, tinges all their work. On a comic paper, women are egregiously out of place. They are witless; they have no sense of humour. Thus these feminine sketches which grow more and more frequent in *Punch*, are weak in drawing, and have no point whatever. Miss Bowers, also, seems to us to be in danger of falling into the besetting female sin of trying to imitate men. Woeful failure is the invariable result of such unnatural strife.

But *Punch's* weakest point is *Punch's* poetry. We never saw a bit of smooth verse in it. Its concoctors seem to think they can afford to be quite independent of prosody. Now, they can't. *Punch's* rhymed thoughts partake so largely of the character of nonentities that they require all the assistance correct expression can afford to make them passable." Rhymed" thoughts, said we? Well, the feeble assonances and discordant jinglings with which the lines of these thoughts end, are rhymes by courtesy, but nothing more. And not content with worse rhymes than a hymn-book's, the outrageous versifiers drop a syllable at the beginning of the lines as regularly as is consistent with irregularity; and think absolutely nothing of a hiatus or two in the middle of each verse. But if they spout their poetry to one another in the rantipole style in which Mr. Shirley Brooks delivered his address at the performance on behalf of Mr. C. H. Bennett's children, the wonder is the verses scan at all.

The demoralising effect which professional punning and jesting have upon the mind is strikingly exemplified by those opinions which Mr. *Punch* is so fond of expressing. Mr. *Punch* would do away with all prisons and courts of justice, and Mr. *Punch* would hang, draw, and quarter everybody who offends against the code of morality as held by Mr. *Punch*. Anything in the shape of mercy is hateful to him; anything in the shape of justice is distasteful to him; anything in the shape of inhuman tyranny is grateful to him; anything in the shape of brutal barbarity is after his own heart. Garrotters and all negroes—especially female negroes— Mr. *Punch* would skin alive. It is a pity that a paper which might wield a peculiar power for good, should abdicate the honourable position of national teacher for the sake of gratifying the petty passions of a few truculent contributors. But Mr. *Punch* seems quite obtuse to the influence which he might exert upon the morals of the time. After doing him the justice of recognising the manly way in which he persisted in condemning the practices by which silly women make themselves Beautiful for Never—long before the vice became the scandal of the day—we can find nothing else in all his recent moral lessons but the frequent outbursts of a weak and headstrong mind. Ferocity is *Punch's* greatest vice. If he would only cure himself of that inhuman weakness, we could wish that his future years might be blessed with the vigour and high spirits of his youth; but when we see injustice and atrocity consistently advocated in his columns, we are inclined to be thankful for any torpor or decrepitude which lessens his influence.

"To be or not to be."—To the correspondent who, under this signature, writes to us, of all persons, "to know how he can best dispose of some painful excrescences that have lately made their appearance on his toe-joints," our advice is simply, take them to the Corn Exchange and barter them for anything that he can get.

GOOD NEWS FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS.

SOME time since, photographers complained that their business had fallen off. Most people, it was surmised, had had their cartes-de-visite taken, and the most profitable part of the photographic business was nearly at an end. Of late, however, ladies have been overhauling their albums, and have come to the conclusion that formerly, under the crinoline dispensation, they had made Guys of themselves, and that photographs under the new *régime* of limpness and fantastic hair-dressing are absolutely necessary. Of course, high-heeled boots, the heel measuring in circumference the size of a shilling, must be brought in. Could the photographs reveal the inevitable corns, distorted feet, and awkward gait which these boots produce, they would be invaluable. A crusade against the present extravagance of women's attire would really enhance their rights, and save the pocket of the being who is usually called A Man.

GEORGE CRUIKSHANK.

A SKETCH.

I waited for the train at Coventry.—Tennyson.

THIS will be but a very slight sketch, for I never saw George Cruikshank but once, and that casually, at a railway station, but, having always from a boy had great admiration for his genius, the impression he made, when chance threw us together, is not likely to be soon effaced from my memory. And, as any true touch, however small, will help readers to complete any picture they may have in their minds of this great man, I will, without more ado, begin.

In the summer of 1864, happening to be waiting, along with some friends, on the platform at the Llandudno Junction for the train to take us on to Llandudno, I noticed a stiff-built, elderly gentleman, bound apparently for the same place. He had his back towards us, but, from the side glimpse we had of him, I was sure he was no ordinary man, and was determined, if possible, to see his face. What struck me most in him was a long lock of dark brown hair, hanging corkscrew fashion down by the side of his cheek, reminding one of those lovelocks formerly, and perhaps now, worn by sailors. By and by he turned round, and I was amazed to find that it was George Cruikshank. I recognized him at once from his resemblance to the photographs of him. Stolen glances were all I dared indulge in; there were plenty of opportunities, however, for he began walking backwards and forwards along the platform. I felt that a little exercise would not be amiss, and walked backwards and forwards along the platform too. Presently he looked hard at me and, coming up, touched his hat, and said, "I beg pardon, sir, but your face is very familiar to me. I must have met you somewhere." I replied that his face was also very familiar to me, but that I was certain I never had the pleasure of seeing him before. He then said, "My name is Cruikshank." I told him I suspected as much, but that I had not the honour of his acquaintance—or words to that effect. I was confused and stammered a little at the time, and, in fact, now I think of it, the finishing touches were given to my replies that same evening, I think, as I lay in bed. He bowed and touched his hat to my lady friends, who were looking out of the carriage windows at us by that time, and walked away. Well, of course he was the subject of our conversation till we reached Llandudno, where he was met by some friends at the station, and as he walked into the town, I was pleased to see so much sturdiness and elasticity in his gait. He would be about seventy-four at that date, but had no appearance of the old man about him,—looking more like a man of fifty-five or thereabouts. All day long, on the Great Ormes Head, which I had not seen previously, and on the sea-shore, I could think of nothing but the morning's adventure, and remarked to my friends: How great is a great man! How even such grand scenery as was before us all day is dwarfed and made as nothing by comparison.

In the evening we were waiting for the train again, but on the Llandudno platform this time; when, presently, the little boy of our party whispered, "Look! there's the gentleman we saw this morning. There's Mr. Cruikshank." I now made up my mind to speak to him if an opportunity arose. A cold raw wind was blowing, and, by and by, I found him sheltering behind the station door, watching the people getting their tickets. So I went up to him, and said it was singular we should meet again, and so on. We had about twenty minutes most agreeable chat. The train was late: he was anxious about it, fearing he should miss the train at Chester, and so not get back to London that night. On parting I told him how delighted I was at having seen him. He replied that he also was much pleased at having met with me, gave me his address, and a hearty invitation to come and see him when I came to London.

George Cruikshank gives you the idea of a strong man, sound in wind and limb, not ruddy, but fresh-looking, and the picture of health, both mental and physical. One that took the world kindly, and had been fairly treated by it. Eyes quick glancing, but not restless; a fine mellow voice; ready in conversation, quick also and fluent, but no monopolist; and in manner so lively, whether talking or listening—such a mixture of brilliance, gravity, and drollery—it was difficult to realize the fact that he was over seventy. Even now I sometimes fancy there is some mistake, and that he is still in his prime. Although gravity appears to be the basis of his character, as it is of all great humourists, he is slightly jaunty in manner, and bright in his attire, reminding you of the old blue-coat and buff-waistcoat times. A thorough John Bull, going in for wholesome comfort and kindliness to all about him. You might take him for a city gentleman, the head of an old established business, with grey-headed methodical clerks about him, coming and going morning and evening from his house in the outskirts, taking pride in his garden and, if he wore a flower in his button-hole, you would not feel that it was out of place. There is a look of the southern counties about him, also, as though he had been bred at some seaport, and had come up to London in his youth, but knew the British Channel well—felt that the French were our natural enemies—and would be as much at home on the sea as on the land. But, withal, there is that indescribable something about him which no mere city man or Portsmouth man ever had. He looks all that I have said, but the facts were otherwise. I believe he was born in London, and he told me that he was of Scotch extraction, his family having hailed from Edinburgh. He was originally intended for the navy, and had been entered as a midshipman, serving (if my memory serves) a short time; but London had always been his home. The best portrait I have seen of him was a woodcut that appeared in the *British Workman*, about three years ago. None of the photographs give you much idea of his clear, keen grey eye, nor of the beauty, mobility, and good humour of the mouth: they are like him, but look harsh and hard, and give you no notion of his being, as he himself looks to be, a good and large-hearted man.

Of course, we are all acquainted more or less with his works. Fogeydom is making the collection of them the business of its life. Thackeray has written about him, and Ruskin; but he has one gift which, so far as I remember, has not been sufficiently dwelt upon, if at all—namely, a powerful imagination. I expect to be stopt at this point by here and there a reader asking, What is imagination? or What is YOUR definition of imagination? Neither question shall I answer, but leave the first to be discussed to all lengths in the proper places—debating societies, where they discuss such questions as What is fancy? and Was Shakespere a poet? Cruikshank's imagination is, like Shakespere's, creative. He paints things that are not, nor ever were, or like to be; but so paints them that if they were, then in all probability they would be as he paints them. In other words, they are complete and harmonious entities. Consider Shakespere's Caliban; look at Cruikshank's elves. His painting of Peasblossom and Mustardseed are things to be remembered—thoroughly elfish, with a quaintness and humour all their own. Now turn to the same subject treated by another great man, but who has not the imaginative gift or, at least, that branch of it which, for want of a better term, is named creative—Edwin Landseer. Look at his Midsummer Night's Dream. The elves on the rabbits' backs are fancifully drawn; but if Landseer had any creative imagination, he would never have drawn that squat figure in the foreground. It is merely Hercules on a small scale. You feel that it is wrong, though why, may not occur to you. A little knowledge of Nature's way of working would teach you that when she reduces the scale, she at the same time alters the proportions. That squat figure is, therefore, a physical impossibility.

LADIES' LITTLE WEAKNESSES.

WITH the profoundest respect, dear ladies,—with the profoundest respect! Our pen trembles, and we know not whether we have courage to proceed. If we were not as unapproachable and unimpressible as our great brother in the Egyptian Sands, we should

forbear, and *write* no more.

But courage! There are spots in the sun; and yet the sun is grand and glorious. There are sundry weaknesses, no doubt, in the female character, and yet we yield to none in devotion to the sex, in admiration of things and beings feminine. Unfortunately, however, while it needs a powerful telescope to discern the solar blemishes, the naked eye and ordinary observation are sufficient for our present purpose;—a purpose, let our fair readers be assured, which is very far from ill-natured and malicious criticism. They are so perfect that we are only sorry when any defects force themselves upon our slow and unwilling conviction. Nay, their very weaknesses are charming,—as affording satisfactory evidence that these fair and perfect creatures are of the same mould as we, by no means fair and very imperfect, males. We pluck up courage as we think of it. We even venture to proceed.

Don't let it be thought that we are alluding to dress as the chief feminine weakness. A woman would scarcely be a woman if she were not more or less fond of dress, a worshipper of fashion, curious about her neighbour's costume, and particular about her own. Indeed, what else have many ladies to do? (We are dealing, mind, with things not as they ought to be, but as they are.) Let the ladies have justice! What is more detestable than a badly dressed woman? Who so ready to criticise as the very philosophers who cry out so loudly about time wasted at the toilet? The very man who sneers at woman as "a creature who thinks of nothing but her gowns," lays the flattering unction to his soul that this frivolous, time-wasting creature dresses simply for the approbation of his own sex. Deluded being! In this he is utterly astray. Women dress very little for men, very much for one another. There are few men whose criticism the lady cares about or fears; but every woman whom she meets, from her dearest friend Lady Adelaide down to Mary the housemaid, has taken a minute survey of each particular inch of her costume before she has seen her for five minutes. A woman cannot help giving a good deal of time and thought to dress; and we, who are permitted to witness the result, will not be so ungenerous as to include dress among her weaknesses. Perhaps, however, we might be permitted to say that we wish the result was always worth the trouble taken by the dresser or the spectator. With every variety of colour, fabric, and style at her command, it is a pity that a perfectly dressed woman should be so comparatively rare a sight. The fact is every woman should be an artist. The paints, the brushes, the pallet, the canvas may be all ready, but it needs the artist's eye and

hand to make a true picture. Alas! have we not unwittingly hit upon a most unfortunate comparison? The paints and brushes, we are afraid, are no mere figures of speech. A little weakness? Yes, and more than a little! Rouge, enamel, chignons full of all abominations;* false hair of any description (except in cases of baldness); tight, nature-deforming stays;] skirts distended until the wearer becomes a laughing-stock and a nuisance; skirts, in the other extreme, draggling in the dust or mud, and wasting good material and all male patience,—these are weaknesses with a vengeance, and should be consigned, along with Madame Rachel and Mrs. Borrodaile, to the contempt and avoidance of all right-minded women.

Nor again, would we wish to include gossiping among the weaknesses peculiar to the female race. We have known men whose tongues wagged quite as fast, and as maliciously as any woman's could do, or ever did. If the ladies have their little tea-gatherings, their sewing-meetings, and other well-known opportunities for gossip, which they fully avail themselves of, and where they pull all absent creatures to pieces,—what shall be said of club-rooms, smoking-rooms, billiard-rooms, all sorts of rooms frequented exclusively by the nobler sex, and of the pretty conversation which goes on in those pure and intellectual regions? What shall be said of, and for, the style of language, the morality of tone, the delicacy of expression which characterize any male "feast of reason and flow of soul?" For pity's sake, let us hold our masculine tongue! There are, however, two weaknesses in the gossiping line, essentially and exclusively feminine—we mean match-making and nagging. The first is an instinctive peculiarity of the sex; the little maiden makes-believe to join her dolls together in wedlock; the maiden a little older reads sentimental novels, sighs to be a bridesmaid, takes a front seat in the gallery at every wedding, and would sooner help her bosom friends to correspond and run away with a handsome love of an officer, than be married herself. Then when she has once tasted the sweets of matrimony, she is philanthropically desirous to see others follow her example. In time she has daughters to provide for—and her waking thoughts and nightly dreams run upon advantageous sons-in-law with good establishments and a nice cheque-book. Finally, when an old woman, her greatest pleasure is to fight her battles over again, and give sage counsel to the young and inexperienced. Who can wonder that ladies plot matches, arrange future weddings, couple all their acquaintances together, see coming events in the very ghosts of shadows, and make timid bachelors afraid of even shaking hands with, or saying "How d'ye do," to a marriageable damsel, when mamma, or aunt, or any female friend is looking on? But as to nagging, that most odious of all odious weaknesses, what terms are strong enough wherewith to express our horror and dislike? It is the special propensity of married ladies without sense. It consists in a perpetual fault-finding about trivial matters. It rejoices in an over good memory. It never lets a thing be—a matter drop. There has been a quarrel, sharp words on both sides—a scene! The husband has been provoked into, perhaps, a strong expression or two. An hour afterwards there has been calm reflection—the husband is ready to kiss and be friends, nay, to frankly confess his share of blame and apologize. But no, that is not enough: madame must needs rake up the ashes for days afterwards; keep on taunting and reproaching and sulking and fretting; be content with no good-humoured patient silence on the part of her husband; nay, be intensely aggravated if he will not answer again. In a word she nags; and there are more unhappy homes, and more cases in the Divorce Court, we firmly believe, from this feminine weakness than from any other cause.

Red-coats and Parsons are two favourite weaknesses of ladies—and, of course, young ladies especially. Our language is, perhaps, a little ambiguous. The weakness does not lie so much on the side of these professional gentlemen (though, goodness knows, some of them are weak enough!) as in the admiration which they excite in so many fair bosoms. It has long been an inscrutable mystery to every male, except the fortunate being himself, how the most empty-headed, lanky, lisping, newly-fledged ensign, with red hair and freckles, and blest with an income of five-and-threepence a day, should be made much of and petted; while Brown, who has good expectations and a stool in his uncle's warehouse, stands neglected in a corner,—Jones, the lawyer and noted wit, tries his newest jokes in vain,—and Robinson, the handsome Robinson, whose moustache and Roman nose are unrivalled, finds himself nowhere, and vows the women are all bewitched. Is it the sword and red-coat? Is it an idea that this red-haired, freckled nonentity will be found some day covered with wounds and glory on a battle field? The answer is simply, that it results from the scarlet-fever—a common infirmity—a weakness, in fact, of the gentler sex.

But as to the Parsons—ah! there we touch on a weakness which is quite intelligible. No doubt the clergyman has an immense pull over ordinary mortals. See him in his surplice. Hear him in the pulpit. Watch him at dinner, and pic-nic, and tea. Listen to his flow of small talk. Most probably he plays the flute (never mind how—enough that he plays) or sings. And then he enlists the sympathies of the ladies for clothing societies, and bazaars, and cases of distress. Add to all this, the decoration of church and school at Christmas, or other great occasions,—ladies' committees of all sorts, and for all purposes,—and the instinctive reverence of the female sex for everything clerical,—and you have no need to wonder at this particular phase of feminine weakness.

There are minor weaknesses, of course—a weakness for croquêt (in which we share), for crochet (in which we thought no male being shared, until we travelled with a gentleman from Antwerp the other day, who was crochet-ing a lady's dressing-gown!), for lounging round St. Ann's Square, for musical promenades at the Botanical Gardens. And then there is Miss Becker, and woman suffrage—but here we must pause. Not for the world would we!—Bless them! give them votes all round, and Miss Becker a dozen! Who on earth could fancy *her* guilty of a weakness?

* Strange ingredients find their way into chignons sometimes. Two young women were fighting the other day in Hulme, when one of them pulled down the other's chignon, and out tumbled and fell to the ground a saucer! O tempora, O mores!

NICKNAME.

FOR some weeks past a discussion has been going on in the *Athenæum* as to the origin of the word nickname. Correspondents have been to the German, French, Swedish, Danish, and Dutch, without finding it. As probable sources of its derivation, they have got such words as necken, neckerei, nique, nyck, nykke, nuk, eke, ekelname, ekel, eckename and ekname. How may not the solution of the difficulty lie much nearer home? Nick is short for Nicholas, and might not all shortened names have been called from it nick-names, and then, by and by, all cognomens, such as Nosey for the Duke of Wellington, and Giblets as applied to a lanky individual, all legs and wings?

NOT TO PUT TOO FINE A POINT ON IT.—The players who allow themselves to act on the spur of the moment, are apt to contract a somewhat vicious style of acting, from the fact that they are necessarily goaded to pay too great an attention to *points*.

TOO HARD ON HIM.—The old gentleman with the scythe and hour-glass must surely have been misbehaving himself lately, or why should journalists so frequently now-a-days avow themselves compelled by duty to write against time?

ON A GOOD FELLOW'S GRAVE.—"Brick-dust."

MANCHESTER UGLINESS.

IT is curious to notice the Manchester fondness for ugliness, and how it peeps out in different spots about our city. The trees in St. Ann's Square have long since passed away; the Black North is not black enough; and any odd chances we may have of relieving our miles of brick walls are by all means to be thrown away. The "cleverest" nation has adopted another plan. His Imperial Majesty who rules our elastic neighbours across the Channel with the iron hand silken gloved well knows the value of those lungs, or breathing places, in a city where vegetation can luxuriate, fountains play, and citizens refresh themselves; and he has accordingly made modern Paris, with its gardens, squares and fountains, into something like a Paradise, the pride of the resident, and the envy of the visitor. Let us see for a few moments how we manage such things in Manchester.

The Manchester Royal Infirmary stands in the centre of a large space of ground. It would, one might have thought, have found some pleasure to visitors outside, and some little enjoyment to patients within, as well as in keeping with the idea of such an Institution, to have had this ground planted with trees and flowers. But, of course, this would be far too reasonable an expectation, and has, by a long way, too much common sense about it to be adopted. One or two solitary trees just remind us of their loneliness, and the grass grows simply because it cannot help it.

In front of the Crescent, Salford, the Irwell forms a magnificent bend, and, from near the Salford Dispensary, as far as the Victoria entrance-gate to Peel Park, runs, for nearly the whole length, under and in line with the road on which you are walking. But between the road above and the river below is a steep bank, of some 100 feet or so in depth. This bank, in bad Manchester taste, is about as naked as it can be; it is a complete barren blank from end to end—one stray oasis excepted; there is scarcely a tree, and the little grass that here and there succeeds in growing seems afraid to dress itself in green. Yet this spot, which might have been clothed in beauty—a very delight—a rest for many a weary eye—remains, of course, a piece of ugliness.

A stranger entering Manchester by rail will observe, about half way between Miles Platting and Victoria Station, in a very old and thickly-inhabited part of the city, a large open space. On inquiry, he will be told that this space is commonly known as the "cholera ground;" and an old inhabitant will relate to him tales of the burial there of those who died when the plague visited Manchester, many years ago. That space is now being covered over with stone flags, at a cost, we are told, of about £1,000. This, of course, is a capital thing for the contractor, it pays him well. But the citizen and ratepayer, whose interests are the health of the community, it does not pay. Let the reader take a trip to Chester. As he walks round the walls, he may notice, just outside the city, a space of ground covered with greensward, and beautifully planted with weeping-willows. That, he will be told, is the cholera ground, and the fitness of the memorial is at once felt. Let him return to Manchester, and look at the contrast.

A clergyman observing a poor man by the roadside breaking stones, and kneeling to get at his work better, made the remark: "Ah, John! I wish I could break the stony hearts of my hearers as easily as you are breaking these stones." "Perhaps, master, you do not work on your knees," was the reply.

PLAYGOERS AND THE STAGE.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE SPHINX.]

SIR,—Allow me to return you my hearty thanks for your manly and vigorous attack on the stage as at present conducted. I don't often go myself, but when I do go I question whether I don't receive more harm than good. It is as you say; if the people would reject and hiss such pieces off the stage, the managers would soon put better on. Hoping that the press in Manchester will assist you in your attempt to purify the stage,—I remain, yours respectfully, W. H.

Radcliffe, Sept. 26th.

SIR,—Allow me to thank you for your article in Saturday's *Sphinx* upon Haymarket morality, which I read with unqualified satisfaction. I have for a long time desired to see somebody, with the "ear of the public," take this matter up, and was delighted at the spirited way in which you dealt with it. It is lamentable to reflect that a company which, for ability and completeness, has no equal, should be found wallowing in the mire of obscenity to gratify the vicious taste of (I trust) a small portion of the public. Blamable, however, as actors are in this respect, their culpability is light compared with that of their audience. I have had the privilege, within the last three years, of playing in almost the whole round of comedies so perfectly represented by the Haymarket Company, and I know from experience the magnitude of the temptation to which an actor is liable. It is a difficult thing to convince a man that he ought to omit the most "telling" lines in his part, in order to avoid poisoning the mind of an assembly, which will certainly not appreciate the sacrifice, and which he knows full well would, of the two, decidedly prefer the dose. Yet there must be in every theatrical audience a considerable number who feel intense disgust at the vile allusions which they are condemned to hear, and it is for such to make an attempt to sweep the abominable practice from the stage. I know it requires no small effort to express disapprobation under such circumstances, and thereby cause a theatre ful of eyes to be turned upon you, some expressing wonder and others undisguised contempt. I have, indeed, a somewhat lively remembrance of an occurrence which took place during a performance of *The Poor Gentleman*. Some little time ago, near the close of the piece, when Dr. Ollapod advanced to the footlights in the manner you describe, and gave utterance to the vile passage to which you refer, the effect upon the "house" was great. I was seated close to a group of gentlemen (?) (some of whom were old enough to be my Father) who were applauding vociferously, and fairly revelling in the embarrassment of the ladies around. For the moment I felt truly indignant, and gave expression to my feelings in an audible and emphatic manner, the result of which was that the individuals in question, from the attention they bestowed upon me, seemed to have discovered in me a remarkable specimen of humanity, and evidently thought I should be far more in my element in a glass case among other curiosities in a neighbouring building. Now, of course, this state of things is the reverse of pleasant, and ought not to be; one person has as much right to condemn as another to encourage, and I believe if those who now sit tamely by would only give vent to their disapproval, a change for the better would soon be worked. I have great faith in a good hiss, and feel convinced that no amount of applause can counteract its unpleasant effect, especially when a man is conscious of having deserved it. By adopting either this, or any other mode of expression, the offended members of an audience would confer upon actors a real favour, for they would then see that the plaudits which now reward them for their "perilous stuff" are by no means unanimous, and would be led to consider well before committing themselves. I hope to see the time when we can take our lady friends to the theatre without sitting in "fear and trembling" during the performance, lest some foul-minded fellow should taint the atmosphere. You must excuse me for troubling you with these few lines, but your bold sally in the cause of decency and morality won my admiration, and I could not refrain from expressing it.—I am, yours faithfully,

JNO. HARWOOD.

Brownlow Fold Mill,
Bolton, Sept. 30th, 1868.

A COLD MORNING.

By EDWIN WAUGH.

MR. EDWIN WAUGH has contributed a Sketch of the Isle of Rathlin to a local paper the *Ashton News*. From it we quote the following description of a cold morning on the Irish Coast:—

I was out of bed by three in the morning. "Night candles" were not quite burnt out, and the waning light of the moon was mingling with the grey tinge of dawn. All was silent except the drowsy murmur of the tide, surging along the beach within a few yards of my window. Earth and sky, the long smooth strand, the grassy sandhills, the craggy headlands, and the little town, all—except the murmuring sea—was silent and still, and clear and fresh, as if it was the first morning of a new created world. . . . As I crept softly down stairs, for fear of awaking the sleeping household, the cheerful aroma of hot coffee met me half way. There was a bright fire in the kitchen. The servant had been up an hour, and my breakfast was ready. As I sat by the new lit fire, sipping my coffee, and wondering what sort of place the Isle of Rathlin could be, the old clock upon the stair head struck four in solemn, sonorous, and lonely tones; and the sounds seemed to rush into every nook and cranny of the silent house. There was no other sound astir, except the clear chirp of one strong cricket, and the timid jingle of my spoon against the cup, for I felt almost afraid to stir anything, lest I should disturb the fine silence which lay on everything around me, like a spell. The last stroke had hardly died away, when the solitary rattle of a pair of wheels came up the road, and it stopped at the door of my lodging.

"That's the car, sir," said the servant, as she quietly laid the coffee-pot down. She said this in a soft undertone, quite unlike the usual sharp, shrill pitch of voice, with which she could cleave through all the busy sounds that fill the air at noon-day. She said it as the silence around was peopled with something unearthly, which she was afraid to waken. . . A knock came to the door. It was the driver. I took a parting gulp of the hot coffee, whipped my blue cape over my shoulders, donned a white hat, which had "seen a little service," and went out, followed by my landlord's terrier, "Trick," whose barking rang loud and clear all over the little sleeping town; and seemed to fill the unoccupied ear of morning with an untimely activity.

It was a "nipping and an eager air," and I was cold. The driver looked very cold, for he seemed to shrink into the woollen tie which swathed his throat, and his pinched nose was red and raw; and the whip in his hand gave a quiet shiver now and then, as if it needed a drop of something warm to waken it up to the

business of the day. The car, too, had a chill and shrivelled appearance—it was evidently very much less than it would have been at warm noon-day; and the horse looked as if it had been sleeping in a windy field all night with the gate open. The very pavement was starved and still, like an old woman, waiting for relief at the door of a parish office, on a wintry day. The streets, the houses, the pale blue sky, the waning moon, and the world altogether seemed as if it had just stepped out of a cold bath, and was waiting to be rubbed down with a rough towel. The moan of the sea had a kind of shiver in it; and even old Dan, who was usually so genial, sat upon the car as stiff and stirless as a mummy three thousand years old. Nothing on earth seemed to have much warm life in it that morning, except the skye-terrier, and even that little bunch of indestructible animation, whose progenitors had wintered with the hawk and fox, far away in the cold mountains of the north, looked as if it had been begotton by an icicle out of a snow-drift. It made my teeth chatter as I drew my cape closer about me, and looked around; but I was nevertheless pleased at heart; for it was, indeed, a lovely morning,—of the kind. None of us had much to say. It was not only too chill, and too soon in the day, but there was something about the fine repose of the scene that seemed to warn us not to disturb its beauty by impertinent gabble. . . As the driver sat upon his seat, gazing with petrified eyes at his starved horse—which stood as still as if every hair of its tail was cut in stone—he looked as if the elements of which he was composed had been put together in a cold state, and would certainly fall asunder, if ever that old drab coat of his came unbuttoned. Dan was "hutched" up into the smallest possible compass in one corner of the car. His old limbs had crept close to together to keep one another warm. He was cased in a strong blue overcoat; and he had a thick muffler round his neck, and a heavy rug well tucked in about his legs. He bade me "Good morning," and then we shook hands, like two marble statues saluting. And then his old eyes tried to look lively from under the thick sheltering bushes of grey hair, beneath which they seemed to have crept as far as possible out of the cold. But it was no use. Nature would not be cajoled; and the old man's unthawed constitution entered a quiet protest against doing anything warm at such a chill and untimely hour. His heart had not taken down its shutters for the day; and even the tone of his voice had a cold sound, like a frosty wind whistling through leafless thorns. Without preamble, we lapsed into silence; and when I got up to my seat, I felt as stiff as a pair of rusty compasses, which had been left out in the rain for a week. The petrified driver woke up his frozen horse with a touch of the starved whip. The chill car started, and away we went out at the end of the cold town, like three dead fish, packed up in ice, for a distant market. The rattle of the wheels sounded strange with all that world of silence to play in; and the old car seemed ashamed of the noise it was making, like a man startled by the din of his own footsteps in the stillness of an empty church. . . . In that quiet morning hour many a trifling thing caught the eye which would have been passed unobserved when the senses were crowded with the importunate activities of noon-day:—the bits of stone on the road knocked hither and thither by horses' feet; the little pools of water left by the rain; the piece of torn newspaper which I saw "Trick" worrying with such wild delight, as it drifted about in the wind, the day before; the driblets of hay, where carts had stopped, and horses had time to munch a mouthful in peace; the sugary dust, and fragments of pack-thread, and tea-paper, and raisin-stalks, and mealy sweepings, in front of the grocer's shop; the mussel-shells, thrown out from cottage-doors, after last night's supper; the broken pipe, dropped by some lounging carter; and the fag-end of a cigar, flung away by some careless swell as he sauntered along, with a glass too much—stuck in his eye; the crushed mouse, run over by a passing cart-wheel; the dead leaves, trailing wierdly in the wind; the bits of turf and splinters of bog-fir, where a load of firing had been emptied; the picked fish-fins; aye, even the very wheel-ruts and prints of horses' feet upon the road—which garish noon would have drowned in obscurity—had now a chance of asserting their presence; and each little pebble seemed to look up, and say, "*Now*, don't you see me? Am I not something, also? Ask me questions; and I can put you to your wits' end, for I am older than you dream of."

As that grey morning dawned upon the unawakened world, our cold car rattled out at the end of the cold town, and the sound filled all the silent street.

PENNY READINGS.

A VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE SPHINX.]

SIR,—After perusing the article on Penny Readings in Saturday's *Sphinx*, I determined to attend one, and see whether they were really so bad as you stated them to be. I went to the Lombard Street Temperance Readings on Saturday evening last. The room in which they are held is used on Sundays for Preaching and Temperance Lectures, and is the top storey of two or three houses. After ascending an almost perpendicular flight of steps, I entered the room, which at one end is furnished with a platform, on which are an organ and a pianoforte. An attempt has been made to give it a theatrical appearance by erecting a stage front to it. The entertainment on Saturday evening consisted (with one exception only) entirely of Songs. I give you a list of them, which I think will fully bear out the remarks of your article as to the class of songs now in general use at Penny Readings:—"Hanky Panky," "They always Kicked me Out," "Georgina Jingles," "Our Sophia," "Why didn't she say so before," "Plenty of Cheek," "The little Eel Pie Shop," "Who'll buy my Matches." In fact, in the whole programme there were only some three or four which ought to have been allowed to be sung at all. These were "The British Lion," "Her bright smile haunts me still," and "Beautiful Isle of the Sea." On the whole the entertainment was simply disgusting, and very discreditable to those who have the management of the Readings. The audience was composed of young people from thirteen up to nineteen and twenty. They numbered about 200. All the songs were received with great applause; apparently the lower and more degrading were the better received. Hoping you will kindly insert this,—I remain, yours truly,

R. LOW SPENCE.

12, Cooper-street, Manchester, Oct. 8.

TO READERS AND CORRESPONDENTS.

Communications for the Editor should be addressed to the *Sphinx* Office, 143 Deansgate, Manchester. Every manuscript should bear the name and address of the sender. All contributions are attentively considered, and unaccepted MSS. are returned on receipt of stamps for postage. No replies or MSS. can be delivered on personal application.

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